

Transactions

JULY 2001

TRANSPORTATION NEWS
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



Transactions' New Look

Welcome to the first edition of MTC's retooled *Transactions* newsletter. We've slimmed down the format with the intention of delivering shorter, newsier stories on a more frequent basis. The makeover is part of a new push at MTC to reach out to a wider audience both with our publications and via direct public involvement opportunities.

Transactions' primary mission is to keep you informed about MTC's planning studies, funding programs and commuter services — and tell you how you can get involved at key decision points. We'll also cover the activities of two MTC offshoots: the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) and the Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways (SAFE). We'll keep you posted on the major capital improvement program that BATA is spearheading for the region's toll bridges, and on the growth and performance of the region's Freeway Service Patrol tow-truck service and roadside call box network — both of which SAFE oversees.

At the same time as reporting our own news, we intend to showcase interesting projects and programs sponsored by other transportation agencies around the Bay Area, and report on key developments in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., that will affect the Bay Area's roadway, bridge and public transit network, or the region's airports and seaports.

Whether you have a story idea, a comment on the format, an address correction or someone you think we should add to our mailing list, we would welcome hearing from you. You can reach the editor in the following ways:

E-mail: editor@mtc.ca.gov

Fax: 510.464.7848

(attention: *Transactions*)

Phone: 510.464.7787

Letters: Use the address shown on back.



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Bay Area Toll Authority Bonds Boost Bridge Work

AGENCY SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETES INITIAL DEBT OFFERING

Acting as the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), MTC has just issued \$400 million in bonds to finance major capital improvements to Bay Area toll bridges, including a replacement for the aging westbound span of the Carquinez Bridge, a second span for the Benicia-Martinez Bridge and widening of the San Mateo-Hayward Bridge. BATA's first-ever debt offering consisted of \$300 million in variable-rate bonds and \$100 million in fixed-rate bonds. The fixed-rate bonds are sold in industry-standard denominations of \$5,000, range in maturity from five to 17 years and carry an average annual interest rate of 4.86 percent. The variable-rate bonds mature in 2036 and are sold in denominations of \$100,000, making them of interest primarily to large institutional investors. Both types of bonds are "double-tax-free," meaning interest from the bonds is exempt from federal and, in California, state income tax. ♦ "The sale of these bonds means BATA can continue to move full speed ahead to deliver the Regional Measure 1 program of bridge projects," said MTC Executive Director Steve Heminger, referring to the ballot measure that authorized a standard base auto toll of \$1 to fund a \$1.5 billion overhaul and upgrade of the Bay Area's state-owned toll bridges and their approaches.

Above: A new span — for northbound traffic — will soon be constructed at the Benicia-Martinez Bridge site (the scalloped span at the left carries trains).

Outreach Brings Thousands Into Process

Thousands of Bay Area residents contributed this spring to the development of the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) by taking part in an MTC-sponsored opinion poll, completing an interactive survey on the MTC Web site, attending meetings of their county congestion management agencies and/or participating in community workshops.



George Draper

A workshop participant jots down her preferences and concerns.

"We're thrilled by the response to our outreach effort," said MTC's deputy director for policy, Therese McMillan. "We've heard from a real cross-section of the Bay Area's diverse communities who have a vital interest in how transportation dollars are spent." In addition to the 1,600 registered voters who were tapped for the telephone poll (see results on back page), another 1,700 people participated in the virtual RTP open house and survey on the MTC Web site, and 700-plus people turned out at the workshops.

MTC made a particular effort this year to ensure that its outreach involved communities with high percentages of minority and low-income residents. The 17 RTP workshops included meetings co-sponsored by neighborhood and community groups in San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland, East Palo Alto in San Mateo County, North Richmond in Contra Costa County and Vallejo in Solano County.

A Richmond woman who attended a May 8 community workshop

told the *Contra Costa Times*, "I'm glad that the MTC came out here to listen to the youth and the seniors and the low-income people."

Interactive displays and public discussions at each workshop highlighted transportation issues such as funding, land use and development patterns, environmental concerns, and social equity. Attendees were encouraged to use sticky dots to "vote" for various alternatives for dealing with these issues. The virtual survey posted on MTC's Web site, dubbed the "RTP Challenge," simulated the nine survey stations at the community workshops.

Even if you didn't take the RTP Challenge, stick your dots on the board at a community workshop or have your evening interrupted by a call from a public opinion pollster, you will have another chance to contribute to the RTP after the draft plan is released in August. The next round of public participation is scheduled for the fall, with the final RTP slated for adoption by the Commission in November 2001.

Calendar

TUESDAY

JULY 10, 2001

1 pm

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
San Francisco Bay Crossings Study
Policy Committee

WEDNESDAY

JULY 11, 2001

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Administration Committee*

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Bay Area Toll Authority Oversight Committee*

10:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Programming and Allocations Committee*

12 noon

MetroCenter
3rd Floor Conference Room
MTC Advisory Council

THURSDAY

JULY 12, 2001

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Regional Pedestrian Safety Task Force

FRIDAY

JULY 13, 2001

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Planning and Operations Committee*

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways
Operations Committee*

10:15 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Legislation Committee*

TUESDAY

JULY 17, 2001

3:30 pm

MetroCenter
3rd Floor Conference Room
Minority Citizens Advisory Committee

WEDNESDAY

JULY 18, 2001

9:30 am

Cathedral Hill Hotel
1101 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco
Public Hearing on *Proposed Bay Area*
2001 Ozone Attainment Plan. The plan is
available online at <www.baaqmd.gov>.

THURSDAY

JULY 19, 2001

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Elderly and Disabled Advisory Committee

1:30 pm

MetroCenter
3rd Floor Conference Room
Partnership Legislative Committee

FRIDAY

JULY 20, 2001

9:30 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Regional Airport Planning Committee

WEDNESDAY

JULY 25, 2001

9 am

MetroCenter
Executive Conference Room
Executive Committee

10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Bay Area Toll Authority*

10:05 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Service Authority for Freeways and Expressways

10:10 am

MetroCenter, Dahms Auditorium
Metropolitan Transportation Commission*

THURSDAY

JULY 26, 2001

11:30 am

Alameda County CMA
1333 Broadway, Suite 220, Oakland
Partnership Planning and Operations Committee

1:30 pm

Alameda County CMA
1333 Broadway, Suite 220, Oakland
Joint Meeting of the Partnership Finance
Committee and the Partnership Planning and
Operations Committee

*Webcast

Note: Dates, times and locations of MTC meetings may change. Please confirm by calling 510.464.7787. Agendas and updated meeting schedules are posted on MTC's Web site: <www.mtc.ca.gov>.

Dahms Honored

More honors came in May 2001 to Lawrence D. Dahms, who retired in December 2000 after 23 years as MTC’s executive director. The California Transportation Foundation named Dahms “Person of the Year” at the organization’s 12th annual Tranny Awards banquet in



Christopher Springmann

Sacramento. The foundation, whose purpose is to promote and recognize excellence in transportation, cited Dahms’ efforts to launch a number of pioneering initiatives at the local level, including the TransLink® universal transit smart card that will debut later this year, as well as his leadership role with a number of state and national transportation organizations.

Commission Actions

May 23, 2001

- Adopted rules for the fall 2001 pilot program of the TransLink® smart card transit fare payment system (Resolution No. 3360).
- Voted to oppose Senate Bill 545 (McClintock), which would establish needlessly restrictive requirements for the evaluation of high-occupancy-vehicle or carpool lanes.
- Voted to support Senate Bill 984 (Papan), which would provide a state and local sales and use tax exemption for public transit vehicles when they are acquired via a leaseback arrangement.
- Voted to support and seek amendments to Assembly Bill 1419 (Aroner), which would transfer state-owned lands in the vicinity of San Francisco’s Transbay Transit Terminal from Caltrans to the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the Transbay Joint Powers Agency to facilitate the construction of a new terminal.

In Print & Online

MTC Meetings Go Live on Web

Move over, Oprah. The world of daytime media got a little richer in May when MTC began audiocasting all of its Commission and standing committee meetings live on the MTC Web site, <www.mtc.ca.gov>. Anyone with a computer and an Internet connection can tune in simply by clicking on the microphone icon on the home page (RealPlayer software, available free on the Web, is required).

“Now residents will be able to follow Commission discussions from their offices or homes,” said MTC Manager of Legislation and Public Affairs Randy Rentschler. Listeners also can access meeting agendas on the MTC Web site, and view them while listening to the meeting.

Past meetings will be archived on the Web site for several weeks so that visitors can listen at their

convenience. To view a list of upcoming meetings that will be audio-cast, visit <www.mtc.ca.gov/whats_happening/audio/audio.htm>.

Bay Area Census Data At Your Fingertips

It’s official: There are 6,783,760 residents in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, with 894,943 of them calling San Jose home,



S. Meltzer/PhotoLink

making the South Bay city the region’s largest. For more details about how and where Bay Areans live and commute, stay tuned to the Bay Area Census Web site launched by MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) in April.

The site aggregates all the Census 2000 demographic data released

since March 2001 for easy use by those specifically interested in the Bay Area. In addition, the site offers historical data as far back as 1860, and links to other census sites. Figures on commute patterns are expected to become available by the fall of 2002. Location: <http://census.mtc.ca.gov> or <http://census.abag.ca.gov>.

Headlines Delivered to Your Desktop

Can’t get enough transportation news? Then you’ll want to bookmark a page on MTC’s Web site where the day’s top stories are posted each morning, Monday through Friday: <www.mtc.ca.gov/whats_happening/headlines.htm>. The page provides links to transportation articles from nine local dailies plus the *Sacramento Bee*, *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*. To receive the headline service by e-mail, send the message SUBSCRIBE HEADLINES to: <library@mtc.ca.gov>.

Facts & Figures

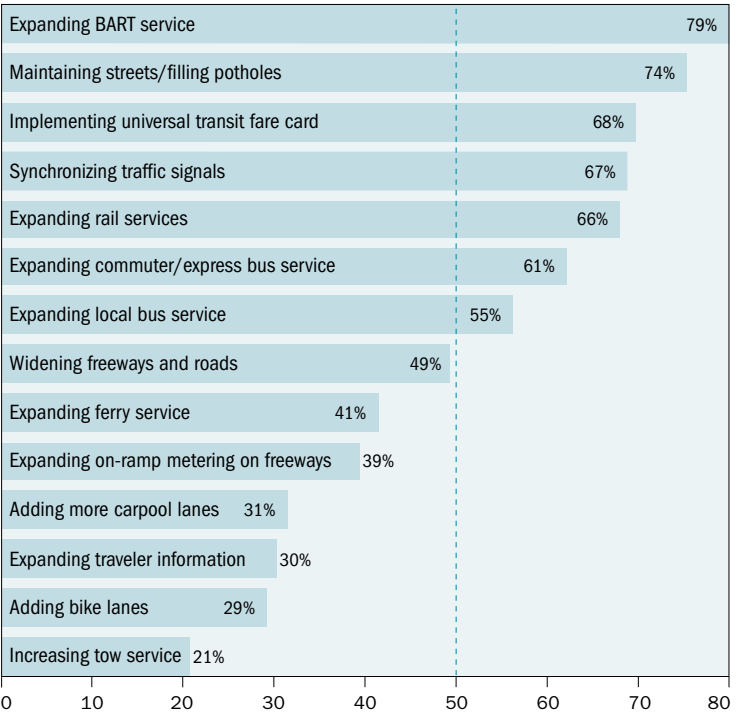
Poll Respondents Weigh in On Transportation Priorities

“Give us more BART service, fill those potholes.” If Bay Area voters could issue commands to the region’s transportation officials, those might be two of the most popular, according to a recent MTC poll. MTC commissioned the public opinion survey as part of its outreach campaign for the development of the 2001 Regional Transportation Plan.

Fully 80 percent of respondents said reducing traffic congestion is a very important issue. Turning toward solutions, majorities of the sample assigned a high priority to seven separate categories of transportation improvements identified in the poll (see bar graph). Transit options dominated the top finishers, with operational improvements such as a universal transit fare card and synchronized traffic signals also proving popular with respondents.

Priorities for Transportation System Improvements

Percent of respondents assigning a “high priority” to specified improvements



The margin of error is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

The poll was conducted in April and May by J. Moore Methods, a Sacramento public opinion research firm that interviewed by phone 1,600 registered voters in the nine-county Bay Area. For more results from the Regional Transportation Plan poll, Web survey and workshops, visit <www.mtc.ca.gov/projects/rtp/findings.htm>.

Bridge Retrofit Review Jolts Bay Area

It wasn’t an earthquake, but the Bay Area felt a strong tremor in early June when an independent cost review of Caltrans’ Toll Bridge Seismic Retrofit Program showed that total costs for seismic safety upgrades to five bridges could run as much as \$5.27 billion, \$630 million higher than the revised \$4.64 billion estimate Caltrans released in April 2001. Both estimates exceed the original 1997 cost estimate for the bridge seismic retrofit program by more than \$2 billion.

Acting in its role as the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA), MTC contracted with San Francisco-based



Caltrans

Rendering of the new east span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

Bechtel International, Inc. to conduct the cost review. Bechtel studied plans for replacing the eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, plus strengthening of the San Mateo-Hayward, Richmond-San Rafael, Carquinez and Benicia-Martinez bridges, and the western half of the Bay Bridge.

The current \$2 toll on Bay Area bridges includes a \$1 seismic work surcharge that was set to expire in 2007. The Bechtel findings should generate more support for pending state legislation, Assembly Bill 1171 (Dutra), which would allow for an indefinite extension of the \$2 toll.

“The Legislature is already halfway through its session, which creates a tight timeframe to solve the funding shortfall,” said MTC Manager of Legislation and Public Affairs Randy Rentschler. “We also must convince the state to contribute its fair share of the funding needed to make these state-owned bridges safe.”

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION WWW.MTC.CA.GOV

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Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Joseph P. Bort MetroCenter
101 Eighth Street
Oakland, California 94607

510.464.7700 TEL.
510.464.7769 TDD/TTY
510.464.7848 FAX
info@mtc.ca.gov E-MAIL
www.mtc.ca.gov WEB

- Steve Heminger
Executive Director
- Ann Flemer
Deputy Director, Operations
- Therese W. McMillan
Deputy Director, Policy
- Randy Rentschler
Manager, Legislation & Public Affairs
- Brenda Kahn, Joe Curley
Editors
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John Goodwin
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